

Hutton suggested that the last-named might be the best solution, but my experience leads me to select the second, and this would also account for the non-differentiation of the Meyer Island form. A species subject to much variation is less likely to show a fixed difference through slight isolation in a short time.

It is regrettable at the present time to see the ignorance of this group displayed by many writers who pretend to knowledge which they do not possess. Many of the statements made by Pycraft in his various works are inaccurate and misleading, as, written in a general manner, they have been adopted from special cases. In the 'Monograph of Petrels' an article "On the Systematic Position of the Petrels" includes the following sentence: "The young when hatched are blind." I have never seen a blind nestling of *Estrelata* or *Puffinus*, though I have seen them emerging from the egg.

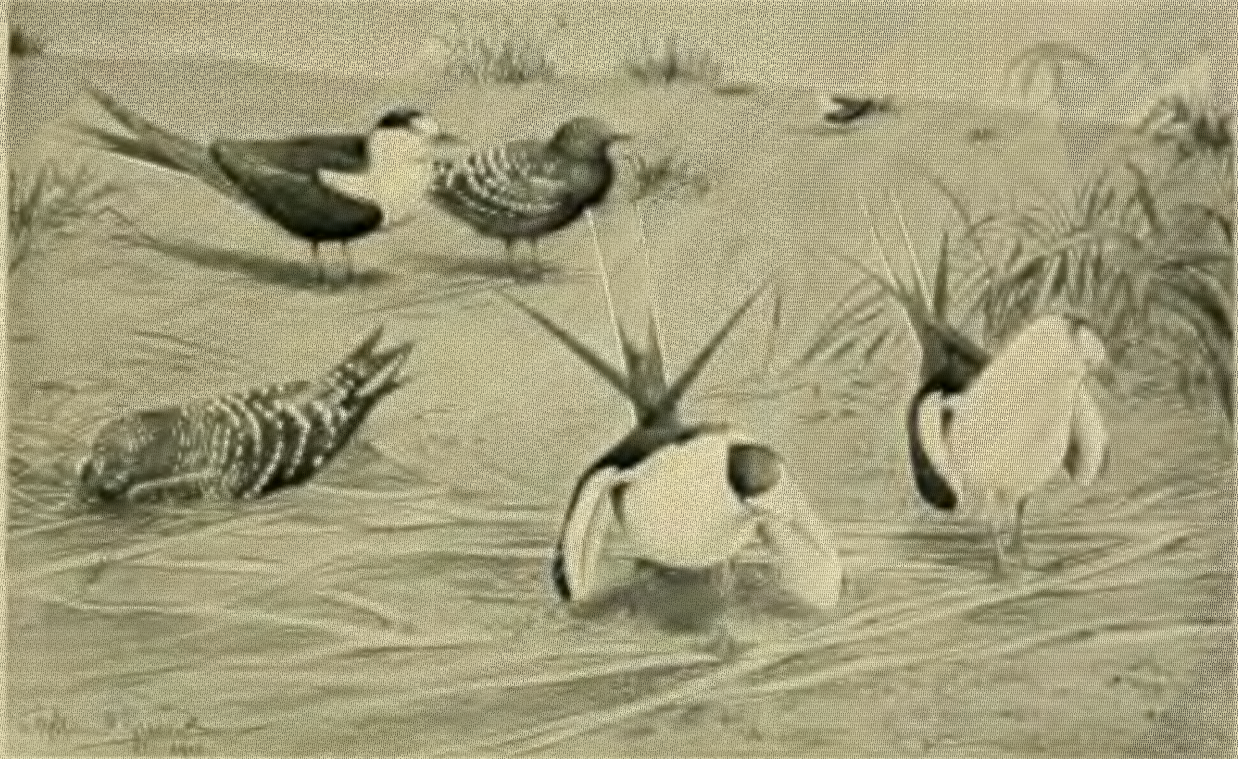
XXVI.—*On Sterna fuscata Linné.*

By TOM IREDALE, M.B.O.U.

(Plate XVI.)

THE beach at Sunday Island, in the Kermadec Group, when I landed was covered with breeding Wideawake Terns. As the season was well advanced half-grown young were plentiful, and the contrast between these dusky birds and their beautiful clean, boldly marked black and white parents, was a sight to remember. For weeks the work of camp building and luggage carrying made it necessary to pass amongst them many times daily. This dreary work done, much time was spent in photographing them and studying their habits.

Had I the pen of a Howard or Selous, pages might have been written and much interesting life-history related. As it is I cannot recount the curious antics which these birds indulged in, but I offer an illustration of a peculiar attitude



adopted by a bird towards a trespasser upon the square foot sacred to its young one. I watched this walk-around many times, and was successful in obtaining a photo from which Plate XVI. was drawn. Though the birds walked round and croaked at each other, so far as my observation went, fighting never took place.

This picture will also show the point I wish to emphasize.

In the Check List of the American Ornithologists' Union, 3rd ed. 1910, p. 46, the name *Sterna fuscata* Linn. 1776 is used for the Sooty Tern, hitherto more commonly known under the name *Sterna fuliginosa* Gmelin.

Upon investigation, the Linnean name is found to be solely based upon a bird described by Brisson (Ornith. vol. vi. 1760, p. 220), and figured on pl. xxi. fig. 1. The description and figure so unmistakably refer to the immature of this species that the name must be accepted. At my suggestion Mr. Mathews admitted it and has since used it in all his works. As birds agreeing perfectly in every detail with Brisson's description and figure are available for examination in the British Museum, there can be no doubt about the matter. However, in the 'Hand-list of British Birds' by Hartert, Jourdain, Ticehurst, and Witherby, 1912, p. 196, *Sterna fuliginosa* Gmelin is maintained whilst ? *Sterna fuscata* Linné is cited in the synonymy.

How this mistake occurred I cannot say as there is no uncertainty whatever about the name. I can only suppose that Dr. Hartert had in his mind the superficial resemblance of the adult *Sterna anathetus* Scopoli to the adult *Sterna fuscata* Linné, and imagined without investigation that the immature must be alike and therefore that *Sterna fuscata* Linné might refer to either.

But such is not the case. The immature of *S. anathetus* Scopoli is quite different and cannot be confused in any plumage with the young of the Wideawake; and there is no other Tern with a plumage at all like the bird Brisson described and figured. Linné's name *Sterna fuscata* must therefore be accepted in place of *Sterna fuliginosa* Gmelin for the Wideawake Tern.